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TREASURY FOR FinCEN; DEA FOR OILS AND OFFICE OF DIVERSION
CONTROL

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: INPUT FOR INCSR

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¶1. The information in this cable is keyed to Reftel.

¶2. (Part I) Summary. Sri Lanka has a relatively small-scale drug problem. The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) remains committed to targeting drug traffickers and implementing nation-wide demand reduction programs. In 2005, the U.S. government strengthened its relationship with Sri Lanka on counternarcotics issues by offering training and seminars for the Sri Lanka Police. After the 2002 ceasefire agreement between the GSL and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a comparatively relaxed security environment led to the opening of a new overland drug trafficking route. LTTE officials continue to police and monitor the route. Although Sri Lanka has signed the 1988 UN Drug Convention, Parliament had not enacted implementing legislation for the convention as of the end of 2005.

¶3. (Part II) Status of Country. Sri Lanka is not a significant producer of narcotics or precursor chemicals. GSL officials continue to raise internal awareness of and vigilance against efforts by drug traffickers attempting to use Sri Lanka as a transit point for illicit drug smuggling. Domestically, officials are addressing a modest drug problem, consisting of heroin, cannabis, and increasingly, Ecstasy.

¶4. (Part III. 23.2) Policy Initiatives. In 2005, Sri Lanka made progress in further implementing its counternarcotics strategy, developed in 1994. The lead agency for counternarcotics efforts, the Police Narcotics Bureau (PNB), is headquartered in the capital city of Colombo. The GSL remains committed to on-going efforts to curb illicit drug use and trafficking.

¶5. (Part III. 23.2.a) Accomplishments. The PNB and Excise Department worked closely to target cannabis producers and dealers, resulting in several successful arrests. The PNB warmly welcomed and was an active partner in U.S.-sponsored training for criminal investigative techniques and management practices.

¶6. (Part III, 23.2.a continued) Sri Lanka continued to work with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on regional narcotics issues. SAARC countries met in Maldives in early 2004 and agreed to establish an interactive website for the SAARC Drug Offense Monitoring Desk, located in Colombo, for all countries to input, share, and review regional narcotics statistics. GSL officials maintain continuous contact with counterparts in India and Pakistan, origin countries for the majority of drugs in Sri Lanka.

¶7. (Part III 23.3.a) Law Enforcement Efforts. The PNB continued close inter-agency cooperation with the Customs Service, the Department of Excise and the Sri Lankan Police to curtail the illicit drug supply lines and local drug dealers and users. As a result of these efforts, GSL officials arrested 9,519 heroin dealers and 9,168 cannabis dealers from January to October of 2005. The largest heroin haul was 11.5 kilograms, valued locally at around \$402,500. The Sri Lanka Navy made the interdiction in Mannar, where a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadre was caught with the package of heroin. This year around forty kilograms of heroin were confiscated in Mannar alone. Law enforcement officials did not make any Ecstasy-related drug arrests this year.

¶8. (Part III, 23.3.a continued) Apart from its Colombo headquarters, the PNB has one sub-unit at the Bandaranaike International Airport near Colombo, complete with operational personnel and a team of narcotics-detecting dogs. Greater vigilance by PNB officers assigned to the airport sub-station led to increased arrests and narcotics seizures from suspected drug smugglers. During the year, the PNB began the process of establishing additional substations to combat trafficking. The next two substations, at the international port in Colombo and the northwest coastal town of Mannar, will be operational shortly. Future substations will also be located in cannabis-growing regions.

¶ 19. (Part III 23.4.a) Corruption. A government commission, established to investigate bribery and corruption charges against public officials, temporarily resumed operations in 2004. In June of this year, the Police Narcotics Bureau, along with police stations island-wide, began "Operation Clean-Up" to apprehend drug peddlers and users. All police stations and divisions are taking part in this effort. Police investigations revealed that a sub-inspector of police has earned significant profit from his involvement with a gang of drug dealers. This officer has been suspended from the service, and a special police team is conducting an investigation into his conduct. In addition, investigations also continue in the case of two police constables caught smuggling cannabis.

¶ 10. (Part III 23.4.b) The GSL did not, as a matter of policy, encourage or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of any controlled substances or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. There were no reports that any senior official engaged in such activity or encouragement thereof. There were no INL-funded aircraft or equipment in country.

¶ 11. (Part III 23.5) Agreements and Treaties. Sri Lanka is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention and the 1990 SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The Attorney General's Office is expected to submit a draft of the implementing legislation to the Ministry of Justice and Judicial Reforms by year's end. The Justice Minister is then slated to seek Cabinet approval and present the legislation as a bill to Parliament by the first quarter of 2006.

¶ 12. (Part III, 23.5 continued) Sri Lanka is also a party to the 1961 UN Single Convention, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Sri Lanka has signed, but has not yet ratified, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and is a party to the UN Convention Against Corruption. An extradition treaty is in force between the U.S. and Sri Lanka.

¶ 13. (Part III 23.6) Cultivation/Production. Small quantities of cannabis are cultivated and used locally. There is little indication that this illicit drug is exported. The majority of the production occurs in the southeast. PNB and Excise Department officials work together to locate and eradicate cannabis crops. PNB officials also sought to set up sub-stations in order to limit trafficking through vulnerable regions.

¶ 14. (Part III 23.7) Drug Flow/Transit. Some of the heroin entering Sri Lanka is solely for transshipment purposes. With the opening of the northwestern coastal waters after the ceasefire between the GSL and the LTTE, narcotics traffickers have taken advantage of the short distance across the Palk Strait to transit drugs from India to Sri Lanka. According to police officials, drugs are mainly transported across the strait and then overland to southern coastal towns, from where they are transported onward by sea. Mannar is considered the primary port of entry for narcotics. The PNB is attempting to control the area better with the upcoming opening of a sub-station there. With no coast guard, however, Sri Lanka's coast remains highly vulnerable to transshipment of heroin moving from India.

¶ 15. (Part III 23.7 continued) Police officials state that the international airport is the second major entry point for the transshipment of illegal narcotics through Sri Lanka. There is no evidence to date that synthetic drugs are manufactured in Sri Lanka. Police note that the Ecstasy found in Colombo social venues is likely trafficked from Thailand.

¶ 16. (Part III 23.8) Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction). The National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) began establishing task forces in each regional province to focus on the issue of drug awareness and rehabilitation at the community level. Each task force works with the existing municipal structure, bringing together officials from the police, prisons, social services, health, education and NGO sectors. For the first time in 2004, NDDCB officials visited the war-affected northern and eastern provinces to assess the local situation and investigate the possibility of establishing treatment centers in those regions. The GSL continued its support, including financial, of local NGOs conducting demand reduction and drug awareness campaigns. The Police Narcotics Bureau (PNB) instituted an annual drug awareness week in June 2005. The programs focused on school children as well as recent secondary school graduates. The PNB is making preparations to organize other drug awareness programs as well, including counseling to tsunami victims in the south and east of Sri Lanka. With the help of Police Divisions throughout the country, the PNB implemented a successful public awareness program at the village level about the adverse repercussions of narcotics use.

¶17. (Part IV 24.1) Policy Initiatives. The USG remained committed to helping GSL officials develop increased capacity and cooperation for counternarcotics issues although bilateral efforts were hindered by INL funding cuts. The USG also continued its support of the regional Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Program, which conducts regional and country-specific training seminars, fostering communication and cooperation throughout Asia.

¶18. (Part IV 24.2) Bilateral Cooperation. In 2004, the USG implemented a law enforcement development program with PNB. Over 200 police officers participated in training seminars. Pursuant to bilateral letters of agreement between the USG and the GSL, the Sri Lanka police fulfilled their obligations. USG-trained Sri Lanka police replicated the seminars and scheduled training for colleagues of the original police trainees at the training academies and stations throughout the island. In May of this year in Sri Lanka, the Colombo Plan sponsored a US-funded South Asian regional drug recovery conference for public health practitioners.

¶19. (Part IV 24.2 continued) Road Ahead. The U.S. government intends to maintain its commitment to aiding the Sri Lanka police to transition from a paramilitary force to a community-focused one, although INL funding cuts and the new Sri Lankan government's decision to move public functions back into the Ministry of Defense may complicate this effort. There is a continued need for additional assistance for training and for further dialogue between U.S. counternarcotics related agencies and their Sri Lankan counterparts, which have proven successful in combating narcotics in years past. The US expects to continue its support of the Colombo Plan.

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